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ABSTRACT

A proposed approach to the generation of a graduate professional culture is grounded in the planned, systematic involvement of students in developing and sustaining a graduate adult education program. The approach has a conceptual basis in the works of Jahns and Urbano (1986), who presented a framework of developmental stages toward completion of a doctoral degree, and reflects the work of Brunner et al. (1959), who affirmed the efficacy of voluntary associations as adult education in action. A case in point is the Adult Education Colloquium (AEC) at Florida State University (FSU). Since its beginnings in the late 1960s, the AEC has served as a participant learning structure for adult education graduate students. It enjoys a status as both an AEC and adult education club and serves its original purposes of being an academic experience and social outlet. With the reduction of the FSU adult education faculty, the AEC has expanded its role to include program advocacy. Especially valuable to AEC members has been the ongoing program development activity. Noteworthy is the proactive stance taken by graduate students concerning the adult education program. Another benefit is the increased opportunity for shared professional development. (Two references and a list of AEC benefits are appended.) (YLB)

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BUILDING A GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL CULTURE: A CASE FOR STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING AN ADULT EDUCATION GRADUATE PROGRAM

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The presenters gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Barbara K. Mullins, former president of the Adult Education Colloquium and candidate for the doctoral degree in Adult Education at The Florida State University. To past and present members and faculty advisors of the Adult Education Colloquium, we express sincere appreciation for developing and sustaining the exemplary learning experience which we here present.

BUILDING A GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL CULTURE: A CASE FOR STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING AN ADULT EDUCATION GRADUATE PROGRAM

There is a continuing need to develop, and if necessary, to restructure graduate programs in adult education -- programs which are relevant and responsive to the social and cognitive needs of practicing and potential adult educators and which acknowledge and incorporate provisions to meet their professional development needs. Whether one teaches, administers programs, or conducts research, he/she does so in a dynamic social climate of diversity, change, and challenge, all of which have great significance for the professional culture of graduate programs in adult education.

Views vary concerning the desirable professional competencies for adult education practitioners and how such competencies mature through programs of graduate study. Standards provided by the Commission of Professors of Adult Education (CPAE) offer criteria on which to base graduate study and do much to consolidate views regarding the acquisition of competencies through graduate study. With these standards as a basis for developing appropriate curricula in the content areas, programmers are encouraged to intensify their efforts toward the development of a graduate culture within which students enhance their professional skills through planned professional development experiences.

Accordingly, the presenters propose an approach to the generation of a graduate professional culture grounded in the planned, systematic involvement of students in developing and sustaining a graduate adult education program. In the proposed approach, learning structures and opportunities which fuel the desire for continued learning, facilitate an understanding of self, and satisfy the student's need to develop behaviors applicable to a variety of professional roles and contexts are distinguished from those opportunities and structures designed to immerse students in the theory, knowledge, and research core of the field. The approach is supported with references from adult education literature which substantiate student professional development needs and recommend professional role behaviors and competencies.

Programming for professional development is distinguished by a conscious process of mentoring, creating access to information, and providing the opportunity for students to practice while they learn. Such programming is seen as useful for persons new to the field as well as for experienced adult educators.

The approach has a conceptual basis in the works of Jahns and Urbano (1986) who presented a framework explaining the developmental stages through which doctoral students progress toward the completion of a degree. Additionally,

the approach reflects the work of Brunner and Associates (1959) who affirmed the efficacy of voluntary associations as adult education in action.

The voluntary association which comprises the case in this presentation is the Adult Education Colloquium (AEC) at the Florida State University (FSU). The Colloquium is a student-directed learning structure which in recent years has established itself as a positive force for program development and advocacy, as well as a natural learning environment as students develop themselves professionally.

The Case: The Florida State University Adult Education Colloquium/Adult Education Club

The FSU AEC history dates to the late 1960's. Its current resurgence began in the 1987 Fall semester. Since its beginnings, the AEC has served as a participant learning structure for Adult Education (AE) graduate students.

The FSU AEC provides an opportunity for AE graduate students to participate in professional development activities and to become part of a meaningful graduate student culture. Within the Department of Educational Foundations and Policy Studies (EFPS) at FSU, the AEC has served as an exemplary model for graduate student involvement in, and impact on, their graduate learning experience. As part of the College of Education (COE), the AEC has provided graduate students with an opportunity to influence college-wide priorities and decisions.

In 1987, the AEC was revived with a new constitution which maintained its status as both an AEC and an AE Club.

This dual purpose allowed the AEC to serve as both an academic course and a social club. Thus, the original purposes of serving as an academic experience and a social outlet were maintained.

During 1987-1988, the FSU AE faculty was reduced to one full-time faculty position due to faculty retirements, illness and death. This, coupled with the on-going maintenance of an academic program of approximately 32 graduate students with only one full-time professor, led to an expansion of the role of the AEC to include program advocacy.

During this time period the AE faculty, friends, and graduate students sensed a 'common crisis.' No graduate student wanted to be the last AE graduate from FSU. The AEC was in place, its members shared a common identity and purpose, and its members had access to information - all of which led the group to respond to its perceived needs.

Thus, the AEC became the focal point for sustained activities on behalf of the AE program. The perceived common threat to the AE program provided the AEC members an opportunity to advocate on behalf of their professional interests. The AEC evolved into a special interest group/voluntary association for the AE program.

The members of the AEC began to take specific actions and participate in well designed activities aimed at sustaining the AE program. These actions and activities included advocacy (at the program, department, and college

levels), inquiry (questioning the powers that be), human relations (serving as a mutual support group), and facilitation (providing a forum to keep the lines of communication open).

Especially valuable to the colloquium members has been the program development activity which occurs on an ongoing basis - setting up the educational component of each AEC class/meeting. This has involved doing a needs assessment with the members, planning and implementing the programs for the semester, and year-end evaluations. This program development process has been conceived, implemented, and evaluated by graduate students.

Also noteworthy has been the proactive stance taken by AE graduate students concerning the AE program and their graduate student learning experience. Through the AEC, its members have been able to suggest and advise the AE program and EFPS faculty on AE program matters.

As a result of the impetus of student involvement which developed during a period of common concern, the AEC continues to provide benefits for both the AE faculty and AE students. A primary benefit for all concerned is the increased opportunity for shared professional development. The AEC has been a "living adult education experience" and an example of "adult education in action."

Based on theory and practice, a group such as the AEC has a place in AE graduate programs. In conclusion, the planned, systematic, and meaningful involvement of graduate students in their graduate learning experience is a winning situation for everyone - faculty and students alike.

REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

CONTINUING BENEFITS OF THE ADULT EDUCATION COLLOQUIUM

FOR ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM AND FACULTY

* Advocacy Group
* Communication Vehicle
* Image Builder
* Collaborative Learning Opportunity
* Professional Reminder
* Recruiting Tool
* Student-Complaint Filter
* Student Socialization
* Sounding Board
* Leadership Base

FOR ADULT EDUCATION GRADUATE STUDENTS

* Leadership School
* Information Exchange and Clearing House
* Support Group
* Financial Assistance
* Class Credit
* Opportunity to Meet Influential AE's
* Job Placement
* Vita Enhancement
* Non-Threatening Educational Forum
* Informal Atmosphere
* Educational Updates
* Sense of Direction
* Equalization Effect
* Economy of Time
* Professional Development
* Presentation Opportunities
* Social Function

SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIALS (WORD PAIRS) WHICH HELP DESCRIBE OR EXPLAIN THE DYNAMICS AND SUCCESS OF THE ADULT EDUCATION COLLOQUIUM

Club/Class

Non-Credit/Credit

Informal/Formal

Open/Closed

Flexible/Organized

Abstract/Concrete

Active/Passive

Spontaneous/Structured

High Task/High Relationship

Learner/Teacher

Students/Faculty